MOTHER·NATURE'S LITTLE·ONES

FRANCES·MARGARET·FOX

COSY·CORNER·SERIES

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MOTHER NATURE'S LITTLE ONES

Works of

Frances Margaret Fox

Farmer Brown and the Birds

The Little Giant's Neighbours

Mother Nature's Little Ones

Betty of Old Mackinaw

L. C. PAGE & COMPANY

New England Building, Boston, Mass.

"SHE HAD BEEN TOLD THAT DRAGON-FLIES SEW UP CHILDREN'S MOUTHS" (*See page 37*)

Cosy Corner Series

MOTHER NATURE'S LITTLE ONES

By
Frances Margaret Fox
Author of
"Farmer Brown and the Birds," "The Little Giant's Neighbours," etc.

Illustrated by
Etheldred B. Barry

Boston
L. C. Page & Company
1904

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Published July, 1903

Colonial Press
Electrotyped and Printed by C. H. Simonds & Co.
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

TO

MY LITTLE FRIEND

Harold Anthony Trumpour

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MOTHER NATURE'S LITTLE ONES

CHAPTER I.

BABY WRIGGLER

She was one of the most restless babies that ever lived in a rain barrel. Just what games she played through the long days with her three hundred brothers and sisters and their many cousins, only her mother or some other mosquito could have guessed. Not that the mother mosquito ever troubled herself to look into the rain barrel to see how her children were getting along, but having been just such a baby once, she may have known.

At the same time there is no use of asking a mosquito any questions. The only thing to

do is to look into the rain barrel for one's self. That's what the little boy was doing when he fell in and sent baby Wriggler scampering to the bottom. The mosquito children must have thought for a second that the sky had fallen, until some one pulled the dripping boy out of their nursery, giving them a chance to get another breath of air.

Strange as it may seem, every mosquito child in the barrel had to rise to the surface of the water when he wished to breathe. Perhaps that is why baby Wriggler was so restless. One minute she had to be at the top of the barrel for air: the next minute in the depths below diving after something to eat. Enough to keep any one busy.

Then, too, baby Wriggler was a happy-go-lucky little creature and seemed to be always darting about just for the fun of it. She could turn somersaults to perfection or stand on her head until she was out of breath and had to go for more air as fast as she could paddle.

There were two games baby Wriggler and her friends certainly did play, whatever the grown-up mosquitoes may say about it on summer evenings when they seem to be so

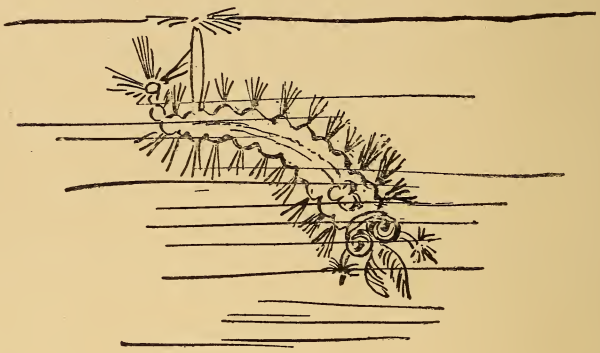
"HE FELL IN AND SENT BABY WRIGGLER SCAMPERING TO THE BOTTOM"

talkative. One was a racing game. The babies formed in circles at the top of the rain barrel and at a given signal started for the bottom to see who could reach it first. Baby Wriggler never beat at that game because she was such a little fuss-budget and wasted too much time darting from side to side instead of going straight ahead. Another game was to see who could go the longest without air. It was enough to make any one laugh to see the scamps rush to the surface of the water when they couldn't stay below another second. Baby Wriggler never beat at that game either.

There were other times when it seemed as if the mosquito children were trying to play circus; but surely that was impossible, as none of them had ever been to a circus nor had they even seen a parade. Everybody knows, though, that grown-up mosquitoes go to circuses, and after all it may be that baby Wriggler's mother was kind enough to tell the little folks about it; else how did baby Wriggler learn to mimic the clown? Whoever thinks a rain barrel too dull a place to live in, should watch mosquito children for half an hour.

It isn't likely that baby Wriggler ever knew

or cared what kind of a tiny child she was. Her cradle days, or rather hours, were passed in a raft on the surface of the water. The cradle was the egg in which she was tucked



away. The raft was nothing in the world but her own egg and the eggs of her three hundred brothers and sisters glued together and floating in the rain barrel.

The mother mosquito left her family that way early one morning, and before sunset all the little folks were out of their cradles, playing "Tag" and exploring their nursery from top to bottom. Baby Wriggler wasn't the only active one in the family. No mosquito, big or little, was ever called lazy.

Baby Wriggler had three new suits of clothes while she lived in the rain barrel. When she outgrew her dresses she simply shook them off, and wasn't even surprised to find ready-made new ones underneath. She was seven days old when her third new suit felt so uncomfortable she took it off. Then, indeed, was baby Wriggler much changed. She no longer wore baby clothes, and she breathed in a different way. The mosquito child had good reason to wonder whether she was herself or somebody else.

For two days she wouldn't play with the rest of the mosquito children, but stayed most of the time at the surface of the water. At last her dress began to split down the back; slowly she crawled out of it, and for the first time in her life the mosquito child was on top of the water instead of under it. Stranger yet, her cast-off suit became a boat upon which she unfolded gauzy wings before flying away to see the bright world beyond the rain barrel.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHILD OF THE SAND WASP

A GREAT worker was Madam Sand Wasp, — but cross! Oh, she was cross! Little, and black and saucy, she buzzed and scolded all day long. Once a small boy picked her up as she was walking over the sand, but he dropped her quicker than a wink and ran screaming to his mother, because the Sand Wasp stung him — and terrible was her sting. The boy remembered it for a long time afterward.

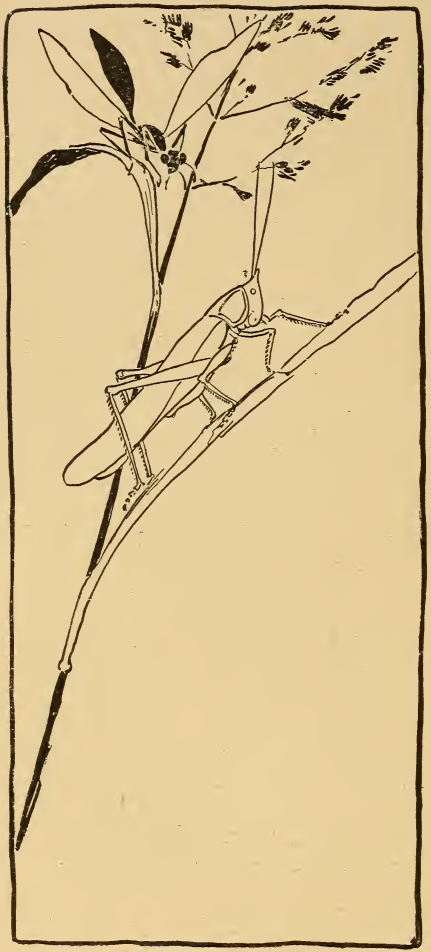
He should have let Madam Sand Wasp alone in the first place, because she was going about minding her own business and expecting every one else to do the same. In fact she said so, plainly.

Deep in the sand she had made a burrow, working and digging until it was long enough to suit her. She had fashioned it with great care because it was intended for her child, and

whatever her faults may have been, Madam Sand Wasp was a good mother. When the burrow was entirely finished, the busy worker closed the opening with sand and flew away. There was a grasshopper down by the brook, just getting ready to show the other grasshoppers how far he could jump, when he was suddenly put to sleep by Madam Sand Wasp, who stung him before he knew what she was after. He was paralyzed, poor fellow, but as he never realized what happened to him, he surely needed no pity.

Though she had four wings, Madam Sand Wasp couldn't lift the grasshopper from the ground and fly directly to her burrow; she had to climb a tree with him and fly downward from a branch with her heavy burden.

It seemed wonderful that she knew where to look for the hidden burrow which she found so easily in the wide stretch of sand. Close beside the doorway she placed the grasshopper, where he lay on his back, arms folded. On his face, upturned to the sky, was a happy smile — the same smile he wore when he was going to show the other grasshoppers how far he could jump.



Madam Sand Wasp rapidly kicked the sand away from her front door and dragged Mr. Grasshopper down, head first, leaving him at the end of the burrow. Then out she came and again carefully covered the entrance to the burrow with sand, by standing with her face away from the opening and kicking the sand with her hind feet.

Twice more she returned, each time bringing a paralyzed grasshopper — and these three grasshoppers were for her child to eat when he should be big enough to come out of his egg. Madam Sand Wasp left the tiny egg near the neck of the middle grasshopper.

The reason she was so careful to close the burrow every time she went out was because she feared some other child would be left by his mother to eat her child's grasshopper, and she didn't want the little fellow to share with any one.

It wasn't long before the child of the Sand Wasp came out of his egg and began to eat. He didn't mind being in the dark a bit — didn't cry for his mother once — just ate and kept still like a good baby.

He wasn't a nice appearing baby — looked too much like a tiny white worm to be exactly pleasing, though the reason his mother kept him out of sight was because she thought the child was safer hidden away in the ground. She didn't dream for a minute that he wasn't a pretty baby.

The little fellow grew rapidly and soon became too big and stupid to keep on eating.

He felt as if he must make himself a bed and take a long nap. Nobody taught the child of the Sand Wasp how to spin a silken sheet in which to wrap himself, but he did it, and if a great deal of sand and dirt got mixed with the sheet, he didn't care, he was too sleepy.

The sheet in which the baby took his long nap was called a cocoon, and when at last he was tired of resting in the cocoon and came out of it, he no longer looked like a small, white worm, but was dressed in a new suit of clothes. These clothes were soon outgrown and the child of the Sand Wasp left his underground home, wearing black the rest of his days, after the fashion of all the grown folks in his family.

CHAPTER III.

BABY KATYDID AND HOW HE GREW

Baby Katydid kept perfectly still, all winter long. He couldn't help it, to be sure, because in an egg-shell he was snuggled down in his cradle with thirty brothers and sisters. The mother Katydid wouldn't have thought of crowding so many children together in one cradle if they hadn't been in egg-shells, because baby katydids are lively little scamps after they get out of their shells, and she knew it.

The cradle was a tiny twig: one the mother selected in September. She had bitten, chewed, and pressed the bark so the children couldn't roll out of bed as they might have done if the twig had been left smooth. The winter wind is a rough nurse, so the mother Katydid, knowing that he would rock the cradle whenever he chose, and having no way to tie her children

in, fastened them in place with mucilage of her own making.

Baby Katydid's mother died when the cold weather came, as did all the grown-up katydids in the world. Only the little fellows in the eggs lived through the winter.

As baby Katydid had at least one hundred and fifty brothers and sisters in near-by cradles, he had no reason to feel deserted, even though half the family were eaten before spring by chickadees and other folks who were always hungry.

Long after the snow had melted and the early flowers were in bloom, baby Katydid became restless. He was warm and uncomfortable. The egg-shell was so tight he couldn't stir in it. Though the little fellow didn't realize it, he had been growing fast through the sunny days and had outgrown his baby clothes and the egg-shell, too.

When he could endure his prison no longer, baby Katydid began struggling to get out of his shell. He pushed and kicked and squirmed, until at last the egg burst open at the top and down the side. Even then baby Katydid couldn't get out without tearing his clothes,

"HALF THE FAMILY WERE EATEN BEFORE SPRING BY CHICKADEES"

and when he finally walked into the sunshine, his baby clothes, bonnet and all, were left sticking to the egg-shell. He was pleased with the new suit in which he found himself dressed, oh, wonderfully pleased, — green trousers and little green blouse — what could be nicer?

Baby Katydid looked at the tiny egg-shell and then he looked at himself. He was more than an inch in length, and it did seem strange how his long, stiff legs and plump little body could ever have been folded inside that shell.

He began to leap for joy. Then he felt hungry and ate the tender young leaves everywhere about him.

A happy young Katydid was he with nothing to do but eat and grow. He wasn't wise enough to fear his enemies, the birds, and enjoyed every minute of his life. He played games with his brothers and sisters on bright summer days, and the game he liked the best of all was "Jump over the caterpillar" — those poor old caterpillars who crawled so slowly along.

In a few weeks baby Katydid again outgrew his clothes: they were so tight he had to stop

eating before he had enough. When the small green blouse could hold him no longer, it split open. Then baby Katydid managed to get free from his old clothes by kicking, pulling, and twisting until he was all out of breath. The little fellow never appeared in rags. So neat was he that he even ate his old clothes the minute he was through with them.

By the end of June, the Katydid child had his fourth new suit. No one would have thought of calling him a baby then. This new suit was unlike the others because it hid the beginnings of wings. The young Katydid became too dignified to play "Jump the caterpillar" ever again. He longed to fly, and his little face had a remarkably wise look.

He knew that wings were growing beneath his new coat, and though he tried and tried to get out of it, he had to wear it until he grew much bigger. Some of his brothers and sisters had appeared in wings and he wished to join them in the air. He no longer thought it a fine thing to leap about the bushes and in the grass, and was ever so glad when his coat became too tight to be comfortable.

At last the day came when the Katydid took off his fifth suit. He was alarmed for a moment. He had wings, but they hung damp and shapeless by his sides. He couldn't fly. Slowly the wings began to dry and harden, and the Katydid took courage.

Wonderful were the wings of the Katydid. Just at first, there was no colour in the front pair — they were clear as glass: but slowly they became green like the leaves, with beautiful veins and markings. Beneath them were broad under wings that folded like fans. The Katydid could fly at last.

Soon afterward he discovered his music-box. By partly opening his wing covers with a sudden jerk, and then closing them slowly, he could sing the song of the Katydid. He kept his music-box going nearly all the time after that, so delighted was he to be a musician on wings.

The Katydid's life ever after was full of adventure, because wherever he went, by night or day, the birds were after him: they wanted to eat the dainty creature, music-box and all. Yet he was happy and lived to a good old

age — lived until Jack Frost came down from the North and said that summer was over, when all Katydids closed their music-boxes and fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

WHOSE CRADLE WAS GREEN

SUCH a nuisance was the Pear Slug baby. Nobody liked him or wanted to look at him twice. In the first place his mother gave him a long name — too long for any use, so after a while she called him Limax for short. Then some one thought that name too pretty for the ugly little fellow, and because Limax and Slug mean the same thing, they called him Slug without saying a word to his mother about it.

There might have been loud buzzing in the air if the dainty lady had ever heard of it, for she was a careful mother and at one time seemed to think a great deal of that same young Limax of hers. She may have known that he would grow better looking as the months went by. Plenty of folks were homely enough when they were babies, and much

harder to take care of than baby Pear Slug. Nobody ever had to fly about with him nights — that's one sure thing.

The child's mother was a neat sort of a person, though rather small to be called stylish. Her dress was glossy black. She was known among the summer folks as Madam Saw-fly, because instead of taking knitting or silk spinning work about with her, as many of the neighbours did, she carried a pair of saws wherever she went: never thought of leaving them behind her any more than she would have left her wings.

It was lucky for the Pear Slug baby that his mother knew how to use her saws and didn't keep them just because she liked to own something most folks couldn't have. When he was a tiny fellow in an egg-shell, Madam Saw-fly, one morning in May, hid him safely in the under side of a pear leaf. She swung her two saws from side to side skilfully as a carpenter, making sort of a pocket in the leaf into which she put the egg. She knew how to fix baby Pear Slug's cradle so he wouldn't fall out when the wind blew: nor did she leave him until she was sure she hadn't cut through the

top of the leaf, which was the roof of his nursery.

With the greatest of care she examined the leaf to be sure her work was well done and the baby snug and comfortable. The birds couldn't see him, nor the rain nor the sun disturb him. The wind sung him lullabies and the juices of the leaf made him grow. No wonder he stayed two weeks in so cool and airy a nursery.

At the end of that time he thought he would like to see the outside of his home: or maybe he heard an oriole singing about the blue sky and cherry blooms. Anyway, baby Pear Slug cut a hole in the roof of his green nursery and crawled out upon the top of the pear leaf. He was dressed in a little white gown and wore a yellowish brown cap. While he sat there gazing around and not making a bit of fuss about anything, his little body became suddenly covered with slime — and that is what made such a disagreeable baby of him. He wasn't pretty to begin with, but after the slime began pouring out of his skin, spoiling his white dress and making his cap black, he was enough to discourage his mother; only she

thought slime a proper covering for folks of his size. All her children were cared for just that way. In fact the pear-tree was the home of thousands of babies exactly like him, and the cherry-trees, too, for that matter.

Baby Pear Slug had no reason to feel alone in the world, though he wouldn't have cared if he had been so long as he found plenty to eat without any trouble. When he was hungry, which was most of the time, he ate the leaf upon which he lived. Being so small a child, he took bites no bigger than a pin-head: yet in a short time the leaf was entirely gone, nothing left of it but a skeleton.

About this time baby Pear Slug outgrew his clothes; so he tore them off and ate them — shoes and all. The clothes must have tasted good, because he did the same thing when he was through wearing his second, his third, and his fourth suits. The fifth time he shook off his old clothes, there was nothing left of them but ravellings which he didn't bother to pick up.

When Baby Pear Slug looked around after eating his long dress and skirts he made up his mind that he must travel or starve. Lazy

young scamp that he was, he managed to crawl along stems until he reached another leaf where he found thirty other Pear Slugs at lunch. Of course he couldn't count, but he knew that the leaf was quickly eaten and somebody was trying to push him aside: so he stepped back and watched the folks march by. When they were out of the way he followed the slimy trail, crawling on and on until he found another leaf upon which to settle all by himself.

The pear-tree must have felt sad enough, being destroyed leaf by leaf after planning through long, snowy days to look beautiful when summer should come at last.

In a certain big book which the Pear Slug baby never saw, though his picture is in it as well as his family history, it is said that when there are great numbers of slugs feeding upon the tree, the sound of so many mouths eating is like the falling of fine rain upon the leaves. To be sure, baby Pear Slug wasn't to blame because he happened to be just who he was. Besides, though he didn't know it, he was trying his best to change himself into a Saw-fly. If the man who owned the pear-tree had cared to save its leaves he might easily have

killed the little slugs before they did so much damage. They couldn't have lived through a shower of dust.

Baby Pear Slug almost choked to death one day when the wind blew a speck of dust from the road in his face. That was just before he left home: the very day he took off his ragged old suit, leaving it trailing behind him in his haste to travel down the trunk of the pear-tree. Poor little rascal, how he did go; as if the birds were after him.

His new suit was light yellow, and for the first time in four weeks he was clean and dry. Down, down he went until he reached the ground. Tired from his long journey, and no longer hungry, baby Pear Slug crept into the earth, where he made for himself a tiny cell in which to fall asleep.

It was almost a year before he awoke and stretched himself a bit before walking up his crumbling stairway to see if it were morning. Instantly he knew that it was time for him to be up and dressed. Off came his night-dress and away he flew — for he was a Saw-fly at last, in a suit of glossy black with four strong wings.

CHAPTER V.

MADAM ODONATA'S CHILDREN

THERE was once a little girl who was afraid of dragon-flies. She was sitting on a log near the pond when Madam Odonata, one of the most beautiful dragon-flies ever seen, darted past her in search of gnats. There are more than two thousand kinds of dragon-flies, yet they all go by the family name of Odonata, just as the little girl and her folks went by the name of Smith.

It was foolish for any one to fear Madam Odonata, because she was not only harmless but a useful creature as well. The reason the little girl put both her hands over her mouth and ran away from the pond when Madam Odonata appeared, was because she had been told that dragon-flies sew up children's mouths and ears. She believed every one of the old stories she heard about the family: that they

would sting horses; and, worst of all, that they were snake doctors, who took special care of water-snakes. The little girl couldn't help wondering if the medicine was dew carried in buttercups, or pollen from the meadow flowers given to the patients in the form of powders.

Madam Odonata might have told the little girl that there was not a word of truth in any of the old stories about her, only, as every one knows, dragon-flies can't talk to children who sit on logs by the pond. One must cross the borders of fairy-land before it is possible to visit with dragon-flies, and though the little girl had often tried to find its enchanted gate, her search had been in vain. She could only watch and wonder in the midst of rustling leaves and cheering sunlight.

The truth about Madam Odonata is this: she was a slender creature who wore her best gauze dress every day. Her head was large, but as she could move it easily it never made her any trouble. Her eyes were large too. Four wings had Madam Odonata, wonderful wings, so swift and strong.

In days long past it was a dragon-fly who won the prize when the insects tried their wings

to see whose flight was the most graceful and perfect.

Walking was a different matter. Madam Odonata couldn't walk a step, because her legs curved forward and were good for nothing except to catch the insects upon which she fed or to grasp a twig when she wished to rest. Yet who would care to walk if it were possible to fly as she could. The little girl didn't need to shut her eyes to imagine how it would seem to go skimming through the air instead of plodding slowly along on two small feet.

Here, there, everywhere darted Madam Odonata, catching all her food upon the wing. Flies, moths, mosquitoes — even butterflies had to keep out of her sight when she was hungry, and the gaily dressed Madam was always hungry.

A man whose name is so long the little girl would have stared had she heard it, once caught a dragon-fly. Wishing to see how much it would eat, he held it by its wings, which he folded behind its back, and fed it house-flies. In less than two hours it had eaten forty and wanted more. Madam Odonata wasn't nearly so dainty as she looked. Perhaps that is why

her children were so greedy, for Madam Odonata had a large family living down in the pond, and not a child among the number seemed to know when he had enough to eat.

How surprised the little girl would have been could she have seen below the dark surface of the water. Not only were the dragon-fly children there, but hundreds and hundreds of other families lived in the pond year after year, never dreaming of another world than theirs.

The water-lilies had a chance to know all about it, but not a word did they tell the little girl, though they sent her their love in the sweetest fashion — throwing her kisses for the breezes to catch and pass on.

In the stem of a water-plant Madam Odonata laid her eggs. The little girl was down by the pond the very day it happened, and though at the time she wondered how a dragon-fly could disappear below the surface of the water even for a second without being drowned, she afterward forgot all about it. The reason Madam Odonata didn't drown was because she carried a film of air under the water with her,

just enough to keep her breathing for a little while.

Scarcely were the little dragon-flies hatched before they began searching for food; nor were they particular about what they ate — anything they were able to catch suited them. Baby mosquitoes tasted especially good. As for the baby mosquitoes themselves, it isn't likely that one of them cared how the game ended when they played with the pond folks. Nobody that lived beneath the lily-blooms ever worried. Life was merry while it lasted, and surely to be eaten up suddenly isn't the worst thing that could happen to one.

More innocent-looking youngsters than the dragon-fly children never played "Tag" in the pond. The little rascals wore masks — a thing few of the water-babies ever did. The lower lip of a dragon-fly child is so made that it can be folded over its face. In the end of the lip are teeth. When the dragon-fly children were hungry they suddenly unfolded their masks and helped themselves to their nearest neighbours. They caught small fishes that way. How astonished the little girl would have been could she have watched the pond folks for half an

hour. If only she could have seen the dragon-fly babies go fishing!

To begin with, nothing this side of fairy-land would have surprised her more than to have known that the water-babies who wore masks were the children of Madam Odonata. They didn't look like their mother — the slender, pretty one. The longer they lived in the pond the broader and flatter they grew.

Nobody knows how often the dragon-fly children changed their clothes in their nursery, but at last there came a time when they needed air, and one by one crawled up the stems of the water-plants to pull off their old coats where the lilies raised sweet faces to the sky. No fairy waved her magic wand nor touched the breathless children of Madam Odonata: but when the heavy cloaks they wore were cast aside, out stepped in radiant beauty dragon-flies where had been but clumsy water-babies, dripping from the pond.

That day the little girl was playing with her dolls where the meadow folks were singing in the sunshine. She never knew who wore the cast-off cloaks she found next morning on the

lily-pads, but told the dolls she guessed the fairies had a dance the night before and left their wraps behind them when they fled at peep of dawn.

CHAPTER VI.

ONE OF THE RIVER-BABIES

BENEATH a stone in the river depths lived the youngest of the May-fly's many children. He was a strange-looking little fellow, but in his world, where the light was dim and all the folks were queer, it made no difference. He should have been thankful for his long, strong legs, and perhaps he was. For all any one knows, he may have made fun of the fishes because they had no legs at all. Not that making fun of the fishes would have been a safe amusement: because if there is anything in the world that a fish likes to eat it is May-fly children by the dozen.

Lucky it was that the strange child under the stone was a fearless fellow who could dive, swim, or crawl as he chose, without trembling like the reeds by the river's bank at the least glimpse of a silvery fin. He must have thought the fishes chased him for the fun of it. More than once he was so nearly caught

he bumped his head against the roof of his house in his haste to escape. Water-babies never cry when they bump their heads, and the May-fly child probably laughed to think a great fish couldn't catch him.

It doesn't make a bit of difference who told, but somebody says that the May-fly child used to steal rides on the fishes' backs. It isn't wise to believe all one hears nor to repeat gossip — but it is certainly true that the strange baby wasn't afraid of the biggest fish in the river. Having no fear of his worst enemies, he was happy as a May-fly child could be.

From morning until night he climbed upon the rocks or danced upon the pebbles; went swimming or took a walk upon the river's bottom. In fact he did as he pleased all the time. When the frogs began their concerts he often floated to the surface of the river to have a look at the moon. He may even have said to himself in his own way:

"'Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.'"

So far as any one knows, the water-baby never had much to do with his neighbours:

he seemed to enjoy amusing himself. The neighbours had ways of their own and were

not friendly. Of course the Caddis-fly children who lived in the river never would play with anybody. It would have been useless to

try games with the Dobson family, because the Dobsons wouldn't pretend to play, but were always going about seeking some one to devour. They never missed a chance to eat May-fly children.

There were baby Midges, Moth-fly children, Crane-fly youngsters, and plenty of others among the pebbles, whom the May-fly child passed without saying good morning. Most of the river-babies lived too short a time in the water to pay for the trouble of getting acquainted with them. They grew old faster than the May-fly child, whose home for three years was beneath the same stone where he put on his first new suit.

Speaking of clothes: the May-fly child couldn't wear a coat any time at all without tearing it, and he always wore out the knees of his trousers and kicked the toes out of his shoes in a shocking way. Indeed, he was barefooted most of the days of his life. His cap would get torn and his blouses as well. He might have been the raggedest baby in the river had he not changed his clothes often, for he was proud.

When he wanted a new suit all he had to do

was to finish tearing off the old one. Fresh clothes grew upon him all the time: clothes that fitted perfectly except that they were a little tight for such an active child. It is said that he had more than twenty complete outfits before he was grown up; an unheard-of thing among the insect folks.

Whether the May-fly baby would have kept clean all the time if he had not lived in the water, is hard to tell. The river kept his face washed and saved him the trouble. No one ever said to him when he went in to dinner, "Let's see your hands, baby May-fly," because, though he played for hours in the mud along the banks, he was never anything but clean.

Strictly speaking, though, the little fellow didn't go to dinner. Whenever he was hungry he walked into the garden for lunch, helping himself to the water-plants that grew all along the way. It was seldom that he cared to taste of anything else.

In the garden he often met his brothers, sisters, and cousins. Of course no one knows what they talked about, but they must have had many a pleasant visit. Whenever a big

fish came plunging through the garden, every water-baby scampered to the bottom of the river and hid beneath a stone. Surely when they met again at lunch they joked about the clumsy fish: perhaps every little cousin had a story of his own to tell about some narrow escape or daring adventure.

So the summers and winters passed until a time came when the May-fly baby grew restless and uncomfortable in his quiet home. It is a time that comes to all May-fly children if no accident befalls them, and it must puzzle the little fellows greatly. Try hard as he would, the May-fly baby couldn't shake off his old clothes: something that never happened to him before. Though he kicked and squirmed, pulled and twisted, the clothes grew ever tighter. When his collar seemed choking the life out of him so that he gasped for breath, the poor child floated upward to the surface of the river.

Then did the old coat split down the back and the May-fly child was free. Instantly he flew away, though he had never heard of wings and must have been surprised by the sudden change that came to him. Straight he flew to

the shore, where, wonder of wonders, he shed his new suit that he had worn but a minute. Such a thing never happens except in the May-fly family, and is enough to make any one stare. What must have been the feelings of the grown-up May-fly child, just from the river, when his beautiful new coat began splitting down the back and his first gauzy clothes fell to pieces, as though too frail for use. Lucky for young Mr. May-fly that it was quickly over, leaving him no time to worry lest his wings were gone for ever.

Down the river floated the stiff old dress of the water-baby, while its owner flew where he chose through the summer air. Once, when he rested for a moment on a fence, a little child caught and held him by the wings.

"Don't be afraid," she said to him, "I only want to look at you. Your front wings are so big and your other wings are so small, and what a limber back you have! I never saw a flying thing that could bend itself backward the way you do. Such a long, wavy tail you have, too — and your mouth is a queer mouth! I wouldn't want one like it, because they say you can't eat with it — poor thing. You aren't

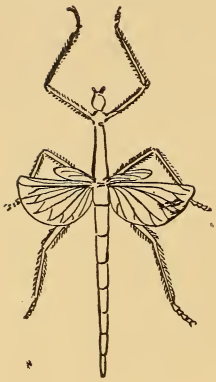
a bit pretty, but of course you can't help that any more than you can help being called by so many different names.

"I am so sorry you can live only a day that I shall let you go this minute," and away flew the captive, free once more in the glittering world.

The May-fly lived more than a day. Two days, three days he floated about — then folded his wings by the river side and was seen no more.

CHAPTER VII.

BABY DAYS OF A WALKING-STICK



THERE was never a more neglected baby in the world than the child of the Walking-stick. His mother didn't seem to care what became of him, nor did she pay any attention to her ninety-nine other children. She simply let them drop from the oak-tree where she was feeding on leaves, and never thought of them again.

It was a good thing for the baby Walking-stick that his egg-shell didn't break easily and that the cover couldn't fly open when he fell to the ground.

There he lay all through the autumn in an egg that looked like a bright black bean with

a whitish stripe on one side, until the North Wind covered him with a blanket of leaves. Then came the snow, beneath which baby Walking-stick slept all winter.

When spring came again and the earth awoke, baby Walking-stick began to grow inside his egg-shell, and one morning in May he pushed open the cover at the top and came forth, — a little green Walking-stick. He had no wings and looked just like his mother, except that all the grown folks in his family wore brown or gray. His body was long and slender, and his six legs were long and slender too.

He wanted the birds to think he was nothing but a bunch of grass stems fastened together, so they wouldn't eat him up. That was the reason he stretched his front legs straight out ahead of him and was careful to move slowly from place to place as he ate the tender leaves of plants near the ground. The little fellow grew so fast he had to change his clothes twice before he was six weeks old.

If baby Walking-stick had known that he had ninety-nine brothers and sisters somewhere beneath the oak-tree, he might have wondered what had become of them. How it would have

surprised him to have learned that many of them were not yet out of their eggs: yet such was the truth. Walking-stick children push off the covers of their eggs and crawl out whenever they get ready, any time during the summer.

When the Walking-stick child was six weeks old, his clothes began to turn brown, and he was easily seen in the green grass. That didn't please him a bit, and as he was no longer a baby, he decided to climb the oak-tree. It was all right to live in the grass when his clothes were green, but when he became like the trunk of the oak-tree in colour, he knew enough to save himself from his enemies by going where he wouldn't be noticed.

By the time Mr. Walking-stick, slow and easy-going, reached the branches of the oak-tree, he was tired and hungry. After he had eaten all he cared to and had stretched out to rest, he looked exactly like so many little sticks, and that was the way he wanted to look. There wasn't a bit of danger that the hungriest bird would care to taste of a twig.

There he lived in the oak-tree the rest of his life, happy as any Walking-stick on earth.

CHAPTER VIII.

BABY ANT LION

THE baby Ant Lion wanted something to eat the minute he was hatched — and that something was an ant. He tried to catch one, but the ants kept out of his way: they didn't like the looks of his long jaws.

There was no one to tell the baby Ant Lion how to catch ants: his mother was miles and miles away. She was a big fly with four wings and didn't look in the least like her own child. She was a good mother in her way, but when she was a child her mother left her to take care of herself, and she believed the baby Ant Lion would know what to do when he was hatched. And sure enough, he did.

There were plenty of ants running about in the sand, too lively to be caught. "But I am hungry," said the baby Ant Lion in Ant Lion talk, "and I must have ants to eat. I will

dig me a pit. Down in the bottom of it I will go. The ants will come to the edge, slip over and slide down-hill into my jaws. Then will I have enough to eat. Never again will I be hungry." And he never was.

Though baby Ant Lion had no shovel, he had the flattest kind of a head and strong front legs. Down on the sand he laid his flat, flat head, and with his strong front legs he scraped a load of sand upon it. Then he raised his head with a sudden jerk that sent the sand flying into the air. That is the way baby Ant Lion made a shovel of his flat head.

He began his pit by first digging a large circle. Inside of that and a little lower down, he dug another circle, and so he went down and down until at the bottom of the pit he rested his shovel head and waited.

In a few minutes along came an ant; a big, plump fellow. At the top of the pit he stopped and seemed to say, "What is this, I wonder?" The first thing that ant knew, he began to slide down-hill. When he saw the open jaws of the baby Ant Lion, he tried to scramble out. He was a strong ant, and though he kept slipping and sliding back into the pit,

the baby Ant Lion was afraid he would get away after all. And he was oh, so hungry.

While the ant was trying to get out of the trap, the baby Ant Lion laid his flat head down and scraped a big load of sand upon it, and the

next thing the ant knew, he was covered with sand. That wasn't the worst of it. Another and another load of sand was thrown upon him until at last he lost his footing, and down he went into the jaws of the baby Ant Lion. That was the last thing he ever knew.

The baby Ant Lion, who had enormous jaws with teeth in them, said he tasted good: all

there was left of the ant, he put upon his head and threw out of the pit with a jerk, in the same way he shovelled sand.

Day after day ants came to the edge of the pit, slid down-hill, and were eaten up before they had time to think.

The baby Ant Lion grew fast, and before winter came he was too big and drowsy to want any more ants. He spun a cocoon of silk in which to wrap himself before he went to sleep. He didn't care a bit because sand stuck to the cocoon when he made it. Indeed, sand was his bed all winter long.

When he awoke, he came out of the cocoon dressed in a new spring suit — with wings. The wings were not beautiful, and no one thought him a fine-looking fly; but he was pleased with life in the air and liked it better than being a baby Ant Lion at the bottom of a pit.

CHAPTER IX.

A LITTLE SAVAGE

THE Lace-winged Fly was beautiful to look upon. She was slender as a fairy and dressed in gauzy green. Her eyes, large and bright, were a golden colour.

This dainty creature had a bad habit: she would use perfumery — and such perfumery. No one but a Lace-winged Fly would have liked it. Boys and girls thought it most disagreeable and never wanted to touch her after they found out that she used it. The Lace-winged Fly didn't want to be handled, and perhaps that is why she carried such bad perfumery.

This golden-eyed beauty had some children: she didn't know exactly how many. The little savage, tucked away in his egg at the end of a plant stalk, was one of them.

"My child," she whispered, through the

egg-shell, " remember that you must not eat up your brothers and sisters." That was a strange thing for a mother to say to a baby not yet out of his cradle, and the little savage must have been too young to understand what she meant, because the minute he got out of his shell, he began looking for some brothers and sisters to eat. He couldn't find one, because the Lace-winged Fly had known enough to keep her children far apart.

Upon the stalk were many plant-lice: tiny green insects that fed upon leaves. The little savage saw them and thought they would taste good. He was a fierce-looking creature if he was small. His head was large, and there were big curved hairs on the sides of his body. The plant-lice were soft and plump, but so stupid they did not fear the little savage, who ate them by the dozen and always wanted more.

They were called aphides, while the little savage as well as his brothers and sisters were known as aphis lions.

Lady-birds were after the plant-lice, too: lady-birds and ants. The ants used them for cows and took good care of them.

It is plant-lice that spoil the rose-bushes and

make so much trouble in the garden. When the little savage ate them he was doing a useful thing for the man who owned the plant upon which he lived.

The little savage, or aphis lion, grew fast, and there came a time when he hid in a curling leaf and spun for himself a tiny cocoon: this he fastened to the leaf by silken threads. For a long time he slept. When he awoke he lifted off the cap of his cocoon and crawled out. How happy he must have been when he found himself changed into a golden-eyed Lace-winged Fly.

CHAPTER X.

ONE OF THE CICADA CHILDREN

He was an old, old baby. Seventeen years he had lived underground. Near him, though he knew it not, were four hundred brothers and sisters, each living alone in a burrow and each waiting to venture into the sunlight.

In the beginning there had been at least five hundred of the Cicada children: even their mother never knew their exact number. It was a large family to care for and kept her busy: if the birds ate a few dozen of the little folks before they were out of their eggs, and if ants, blackbirds, and pigs tasted of them in later days, she never knew it. Who could count five hundred children once a week to see if they were all at home? The Cicada mother couldn't: it was out of the question. She did her best to fasten the babies securely in their nurseries and then left them to the care of nature.

The nurseries were made in the branches of oak-trees. The mother Cicada built them herself, because she was a better carpenter than the father Cicada, who was a drummer by profession. Just behind his wings, securely fastened to his sides and in plain sight, were a pair of kettle-drums — such wonderful drums. They were played upon with cords instead of sticks — cords inside the drums which were tightened and loosened in a strange fashion, causing sounds that were sometimes heard a mile away.

From morning until night the father Cicada beat his drums, while the mother Cicada built the nurseries. She carried a set of carpenter tools beneath her wings just as the father Cicada carried his drums. Sometimes she made fifty nests in a single branch, leaving from ten to twenty eggs, placed in two rows, in each nest. It was an unfortunate thing for the oak-tree when a large number of cicadas made it their home, boring holes in all the limbs and twigs, causing them to die or making them so weak they were snapped and broken by every wind that blew.

The old, old Cicada baby down in the burrow never saw his mother: neither had he

any memory of the day when he left his egg-shell and walked out of the nursery — a lively little fellow with six legs. His colour was yellowish white except that his eyes and the claws of his front legs were reddish. On his shoulders were tiny humps in the place of wings. He looked around for a few moments, quickly deciding that he must in some way reach the ground. Running to the side of the branch, he loosened his hold and fell. How he dared do it was a mystery, and the wonder is that he was not killed. Soon afterward he dug his burrow and made for himself a little cave among the roots of the oak-tree.

Four times within its narrow walls he changed his clothes, until at last, at the end of seventeen years, he grew tired of his dark home, and restless. More than once he had crept to the top of his burrow and looked about him. He liked to feel the warm air and to see how the world appeared above the ground.

How astonished he must have been if he noticed the four hundred brothers and sisters poking their heads above the earth too.

It was night and the birds were asleep when the baby Cicada finally ventured from his bur-

row. His old suit, that he had worn at least three years, was too tight: he crawled upon the trunk of an oak-tree to take it off. It was dry and hard, but he managed after awhile to make a long tear in the back of the coat: then bit by bit he pulled himself out of the old suit, crawled away, and left it hanging to the tree.

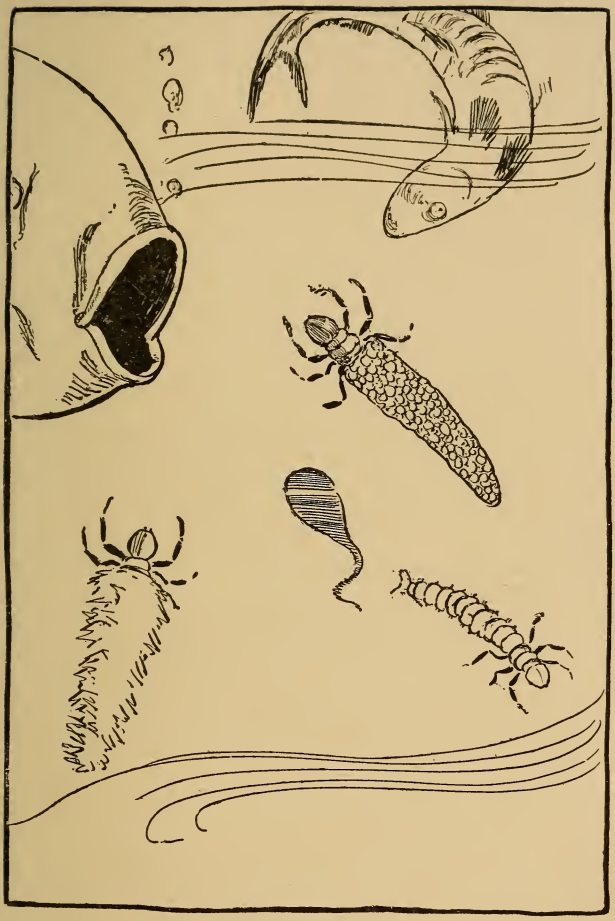
Folks who saw him in the morning, dressed in gauzy black, called him the Seventeen-year Locust, though Cicada was his name. When he spread his great wings and flew through the sunlight it seemed like a fairy tale that he was the old, old baby who had lived seventeen years underground. Yet such was the truth.

CHAPTER XI.

A WATER-BABY

THE Caddis Worm had never seen his mother. Where she was or what she looked like, he didn't know. Not that he ever asked any questions. Little folks who live in ponds and streams learn to keep out of the way and say nothing. It wouldn't be safe for them to talk too much or they might be eaten up by some hungry creature, fond of children. It frightened the Caddis Worm to even see a fish go swimming by, because he knew that fishes swallowed babies like him.

He and a great many brothers and sisters were hatched at the same time from eggs that had been left on the floating-leaf of a water-plant. They knew without being told that they must make little houses for themselves to live in.



WATER-BABIES

One brother was a slow-poke, though, and while he was wasting his time, along came a pollywog, and down went the little brother right into the pollywog's stomach. Another little brother was making fun of one of the sisters because the house she was trying to make of sticks didn't look pretty, when along came a minnow and down went that little brother: never was seen again. Another little brother was silly enough to listen to a tadpole who said, "Why do you make a house for yourself to live in? You are such a handsome fellow — so slender and wriggling! You ought not to hide yourself away where folks like me cannot see you! How I wish I were long and slim like you! Do come closer and see how clumsy I am!" That silly little brother went closer, and then he never was seen again, because the tadpole swallowed him as quickly as any old toad ever swallowed a fly.

Another little brother said he guessed he wouldn't make a house because it was so much pleasanter to swim around the pond without one. It wasn't any time at all before a giant water-bug saw him and ate him up.

It is hard to tell what might have become of the Caddis Worm if he had not been wiser than the little brothers. He built his house before he ate breakfast. This house, or case, was long and round as the Caddis Worm's body. It was made of tiny stones and grains of sand fastened together with sticky silk, which the strange baby knew how to spin, though no one had ever taught him.

He might have made the house of sticks or leaves, or even of water-snail shells as many of the brothers and sisters did, but he liked stones and sand better.

Inside the house he was safe and happy. He could crawl about the bottom of the pond or go swimming, house and all. When he was hungry he fed on water-plants. There wasn't much danger of anything happening to his head, because it was so tough and horny; and the wisest fish would never dream that inside that long, round house of stones and sand was anything good to eat.

Thus the Caddis Worm lived for many months, changing his clothes when they were so tight he wasn't comfortable in his old ones and couldn't breathe easily through his sides.

Nobody knew just how many new suits he had while he was in the curious house, but surely he was contented and enjoyed his life.

It isn't probable that he ever tried to find his mother, and if he had it would have done him no good, for she was not in the pond. When the mother was a baby, she had lived in the pond just as her children did, but that was long before; and when the Caddis Worm lived in his little house his mother was a Caddis Fly in the deep shade of the woods near the pond. She had four wings that could be folded closely together, and long feelers, called antennæ, just above her mouth.

Boys who were well acquainted with the Caddis Worms almost never saw their mother, because she used to hide in the daytime and fly at night. They might not have known who she was if they had seen her.

There came a time when the Caddis Worm felt that he must take a nap. He was oh, so tired. He wanted to go to sleep without fear of being disturbed, so he closed his back door and his front door with curtains of silk netting which he spun just as he had spun the silk with which he had glued his house together.

Then he changed his clothes and slept, nobody knows how long.

When he awoke he felt as if he couldn't breathe: for the first time in his life he needed air. He worked his way through the silk curtain at his front door and got to the top of the water as quickly as he could. Then he jerked off his old coat, leaving it in the water while he spread the wings that had been hidden beneath it — wings he didn't know he had until he tried to use them — and flew upward through the air, no longer a water-baby, but a Caddis Fly.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GIANT'S BABY

In his stone castle surrounded by the Mud Hills, lived the giant's baby — and a terrible child was he, dreaded by all the folks who lived in the pond. Far away in a great city his father and his mother had met a tragic death, though the baby never knew what became of them. He was so cruel and selfish he would have driven his own mother away from the Mud Hills if she had ever called to see him. Not that she would have troubled herself, for the giantess was far from tender-hearted and would never have visited the pond again had she lived two hundred years.

Having once got out of the water she and the giant kept out of it. They even changed their names when they went to the city, calling themselves Electric Light Bugs. They wouldn't have had any one know that they ever

lived in a country pond for the world. Every evening, in company with hundreds of other Giant Water Bugs like themselves, they buzzed around the electric lights on the street corners, bragging about their great size and what a fine thing it was to be the largest bugs in their part of the world and to have city folks talking and wondering about them.

One night the giant and his wife banged against the electric light, just as many of their relatives had done before them, and stunned by the blow, fell to the pavement, where they were quickly trampled to death beneath the feet of hurrying crowds.

At the time this happened the baby Water Bug was only an egg fastened to the stem of a plant: even then he made the pond folks stare. Different ones looked him over and wondered what sort of an egg he was.

The Water Striders, slender, long-legged folks who knew the pond from beginning to end, declared that none of their friends had ever seen anything like him. They gathered in groups upon the surface of the water to talk about him, while every other minute one would row over to have a closer view of the

giant egg. The Water Striders used their hind legs as oars, and were a most interesting family in many ways. They often gave parties among themselves, and seemed to enjoy life thoroughly, though they were called a gossiping set by the Frog of the pond. He was such an old croaker, though, nobody paid much attention to what he said.

From the muddy bank Mr. Toad-bug, odd and ugly looking as ever he could be, blinked at the great egg until his eyes almost popped out of his head — they were queer, bulging eyes anyway, almost as curious as Mr. Marsh Treader's long head. Mr. Marsh Treader, by the way, was so well acquainted with Mr. Toad-bug that he offered to crawl over the water and examine the large round egg, but though he looked at it from every side, he couldn't tell what it was: and there was nothing left for Mr. Toad-bug to do but wink, blink, and wonder until the day came when the baby giant ate him up, and the thin Mr. Marsh Treader with him.

Another one of the pond folks who didn't know what to think of the giant egg was the Water Boatman, who wore a mottled coat. He

was a famous swimmer, though a true air breather. When he went down into the water visiting he carried his air with him. His family, who had lived in the pond for years, used to swim down and bury themselves in the mud when the cold weather came, and there they stayed all winter. Yet the Water Boatman had never heard of so big an egg, and though he paddled around the pond from morning until night asking questions, he couldn't find any one who knew more about it than he did.

Then there were the Back Swimmers — those odd ones the Water Boatmen used to laugh at because they couldn't swim like other folks. Every one in their family had taken a look at the great egg on the plant stem, though that was all the good it did. Something the Back Swimmers used to do astonished the baby giant himself after he had outgrown his egg.

Like the Water Boatmen, the Back Swimmers never went to the bottom of the pond without taking a film of air with them, though instead of carrying just enough they always took so much air under the water they had to

cling fast to stones or weeds to keep themselves from popping to the surface. It was too much like being tied to a balloon for comfort.

One of the Back Swimmers bumped into the Giant Water Bug's child when he was making his first trip to the stone castle in the Mud Hills. He couldn't help it and didn't intend to do it, but the stone he tried to grasp was so slippery he lost his hold, and the next thing he knew — *bang* — he went right against the biggest bug he ever met. The unlucky fellow never told the rest of the Back Swimmers about it because the baby giant ate him, keeping on his way to the Mud Hills as though nothing had happened. Folks had to learn to keep out of his way.

It was like the Giant Water-baby to choose the dungeon of his castle for his living-room: there he hid himself, darting forth to seize any who might venture too near. Little fishes were often dragged into the dungeon to be eaten up — frogs too: in fact nobody was safe who crossed the Mud Hills. Strangers thought no one was at home in the stone castle if they saw no signs of life about the place. Who would

have dreamed of the hungry one waiting in his dungeon for a bite?

When the Giant Water-baby put on his coat and started out, all small folks, and big folks too, got out of his way if they could. The mere sight of him was enough to scare a good-sized frog; so fierce was he and so powerful were the great arms in which he grasped his victims. His hind legs were used for swimming. He often bragged that no one in the pond could go faster than he, and the biggest fish there never chose to race with him.

About the time young Giant Water Bug grew tired of the Mud Hills, a schoolboy visited the pond. In one hand he carried a pail, in the other a rake. He wanted to know how the pond folks lived and meant to take a good pailful home with him. It so happened that he caught the Giant Water Bug first thing simply because the silly baby tried to capture the rake when it came dragging along the bottom of the pond, tearing away the Mud Hills and waking the echoes in the stone castle.

Only a few more days and the baby giant might have left the pond on the strong wings folded beneath his coat — wings he never used.

"A SCHOOLBOY VISITED THE POND"

When the rake flashed into the sunlight the baby giant gave a mighty leap that landed him high and dry on the bank.

Vainly the boy searched for his treasure while vainly the water-baby tried to find his way home. The time hadn't come when he could live in the air nor the sunshine. Long before the Frog of the pond began his song at evening the Giant Water-baby was dead.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TIGER BEETLE'S BABY

THE Tiger Beetle had a baby: one of the worst-looking babies ever seen. He didn't look a bit like his mother when he was little, oh, not the least bit.

She was a fine-looking creature: her form was graceful and her eyes were large and bright. Her dress was metallic green, trimmed with spots of yellow. Of all the beetles, none were so light of foot nor so swift of wing as the family to which she belonged. Walking or flying she came and went like a flash. All beetles have six legs, yet some of them are ever so slow and clumsy — can't walk fast to save their lives. Small boys catch them without half trying.

Tiger beetles would be ashamed to be so

easily captured, and seem to enjoy playing with the boys, their wings glittering in the sunlight as they fly on and on down the dusty road. When the tiger beetles play "Tag" in this fashion, they often alight to rest, keeping their faces toward the boys who are chasing them. They will allow themselves to be almost caught, and then away they go, saying by their actions "Catch me if you can."

During the bright, hot days of summer, the Tiger Beetle had the gayest kind of a time, though she never mentioned her baby to any one. She must have been ashamed of him, and small wonder if she was — because he was the greediest little scamp that ever hid himself in a hole in the ground.

He was horrible to look at. His large, flat head was brownish black, and his jaws were frightful, closing with a clicking sound. At the ends of his six brown legs, which were close together near his head, were stout claws. There was a hump on his back near his tail and on that hump were two hooks. The part of his body above his legs was hard and brown, while the rest of his long make-up was of a whitish colour with two rows of brown spots

on his back. Along his sides were tufts of reddish hair.

The ants and other ground folks in his neighbourhood must have been alarmed when they saw him crawl out of his egg-shell with his four black eyes wide open: probably scampered away fast as they could go.

The Tiger Beetle's baby seemed to know from the first that the top of the earth was no place for him, as he began right away to make himself a burrow. There he lived until the following spring, when he became a full-grown tiger beetle on wings.

One day when he was a little fellow he was waiting for a soft worm to come along. Worms and caterpillars often went out walking near his home, and whenever he could catch one he pulled it in, took it to the bottom of his burrow and ate it up.

The Tiger Beetle's baby was always hungry, not only hungry, but greedy. While he waited at the top of his burrow, his flat head sticking out a little at the top and his jaws wide open, a robin alighted near and said a few things in the robin language that frightened the Tiger

Beetle's baby worse than he had ever been frightened in his life before.

Quick as lightning he dropped to the bottom of his burrow, and there he stayed a long time, until he was sure the robin had gone. She had said something about pulling angleworms out of their holes! The Tiger Beetle's baby was always afraid of birds after that.

When the robin had flown away, a yellow caterpillar that had been hiding from the bird crawled rapidly over the ground on her way to a new feeding-place. It does seem as if she was careless to walk right into a trap, but the first thing she knew she was being pulled head first into a hole in the ground.

The Tiger Beetle's baby had her fast in his jaws. It didn't do the caterpillar a bit of good to try to pull the little fellow to the top of the earth, because he was holding on to both sides of his burrow by the claws at the ends of his legs and the hooks that were in the hump on his back.

It isn't likely the caterpillar ever knew what happened to her, so quickly was it all over. Before she had a chance to think, she was eaten up and the Tiger Beetle's baby was at the

top of his burrow, looking for more victims. Sometimes he even covered his head and his jaws with earth so a caterpillar wouldn't know he was there if she was watching for danger.

There came a day when a boy played a trick on the Tiger Beetle's baby. He saw a hole in the ground, big around as a lead pencil, and wondering what was at the bottom of it, he lowered a grass stem into the burrow.

When the Tiger Beetle's baby saw the grass stem coming, he thought it was a new kind of a worm tumbling into his cave, so he opened his jaws and waited. Down came the grass stem, and in a moment, snap went the jaws upon it.

When the boy began pulling the grass stem out of the hole, the Tiger Beetle's baby, silly fellow, thought the worm was trying to get away and hung on tighter than ever, letting the boy pull him right into the sunlight on the top of the ground. How the boy laughed at the queer creature, not dreaming for a minute that he was looking at the Tiger Beetle's baby.

The Tiger Beetle herself flew by just then, and seeing her child in trouble, persuaded the

boy to play "Tag" with her by flaunting her wings almost in his face. The boy followed her, giving the ugly baby a chance to drop back into his burrow, where he lived in safety, until after many changes he was ready to come forth of his own accord to live in the sunshine.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BABY TUMBLE-BUG

Baby Tumble-bug was tucked away in an egg, sound asleep. Father Tumble-bug and Mother Tumble-bug, his parents, were two black beetles who lived in the barnyard. Of course they talked Tumble-bug talk, and no one can be sure of exactly what they said. It seemed to be something like this:

Said Mother Tumble-bug: "Do you suppose the baby is warm enough?"

Said Father Tumble-bug: "Put some more blankets on him if you think he isn't. Here, I'll help you. We must roll him up snug and warm."

Then they rolled baby Tumble-bug in so many blankets he was entirely hidden among them; indeed he was wrapped in a regular ball of blankets — a ball bigger than his father and his mother put together. The blankets were

L. of C.

nothing but dirt. The Tumble-bug family have always used that kind. Thousands of years ago, in Egypt, their ancestors set the fashion.

It was a lucky thing for baby Tumble-bug that he was sound asleep, or he might have been frightened when his father and his mother began rolling him over the hills and the valleys on the way to his nursery.

"It seems to me," said Mother Tumble-bug, "that under that tall grass by the fence is just the place that will suit us."

They were looking for a spot in which to bury baby Tumble-bug. He was too young to be left on top of the ground, exposed to the hot sun and possible enemies. All Tumble-bugs spend their baby days in underground nurseries.

"Just as you think best," replied Father Tumble-bug, standing on his head and getting in position to push the ball, while Mother Tumble-bug climbed on top of it.

"Now I'm ready, Father Tumble-bug," said she, leaning all her weight toward the front of the ball. Father Tumble-bug, walking on his hands, kicked with his hind feet. Mother Tumble-bug pulled, and over went the ball.

This was done again and again. Often as the ball went over, Mother Tumble-bug climbed to the top, ready for another start.

Not for an instant did she leave Baby Tumble-bug. Even when Father Tumble-bug gave a mighty kick at the top of a hill, she kept tight hold of the precious bundle, rolling over and over with it until the ball stopped.

If Father Tumble-bug laughed, who could blame him? Mother Tumble-bug did look funny going heels over head down the hill.

"Are you hurt?" he asked, running to her assistance.

"No, thank you," replied Mrs. Tumble-bug. "I bumped my head a little, that is all."

Mother Tumble-bug's head was flat — ever so flat.

"I was afraid the baby would get uncovered, but he is safe, the little darling. You must be more careful, Father Tumble-bug. I told you we should have gone the other way. I almost knew we were on a hill."

Father Tumble-bug didn't say a word, but he looked cross as a bear. It wasn't so easy as it seemed to help roll that ball, by standing

on his head and kicking with his hind legs. She ought to have told him of the danger.

At last a place was found to put the baby: it exactly suited Mother Tumble-bug, so she and Father Tumble-bug shovelled away the earth beneath the ball.

"Now run away, Father Tumble-bug, run away. I can get the baby into the nursery without any more help, thank you."

Father Tumble-bug was only too glad to be excused.

Mother Tumble-bug was a great worker. She wasn't a bit afraid of spoiling her hands nor her clothes. Upside down she went beneath that precious bundle of hers, digging into the earth with her hands and feet, and tossing it above the ball.

Slowly baby Tumble-bug, cradle and all, went into his down-cellar nursery. Mother Tumble-bug had a middle pair of legs with which she clung to baby Tumble-bug's bundle of blankets, at the some time pulling it downward. In a little while she was out of sight, and however she managed to dig deeper into the darkness of the ground is something known only to Tumble-bugs.

When her work was finished, Mother Tumble-bug climbed through the loosened earth into the daylight. That was the last she ever saw of baby Tumble-bug. When he awoke, he crept out of his egg and ate everything he found among the blankets. He outgrew his baby clothes in no time, and finally, when he was big enough to wear the same kind of a suit that his father and mother did, he left the nursery, poking his queer, flat head out of the earth — a baby Tumble-bug no longer.

THE END.

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